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THE SOLVING OF A MYSTERY CLIFTON JOHNSON.

THERE'S a great many robbers and burglars a-round nowadays—you see something in the papers about 'em every day—and people say to me, "Why, I wouldn't stay alone here in the house the way you do, day and night, for anything!"

But livin' in a factory village like this there's neighbors plenty and I guess I could call out and make 'em hear if there was any trouble. Besides I'm not the kind that scares easy. "If you aint got anything to lose, you aint got anything to fear," I tell 'em. What have I got that a burglar wants? I aint got any silver in the house—not even a silver teaspoon, so I feel all right about burglars.

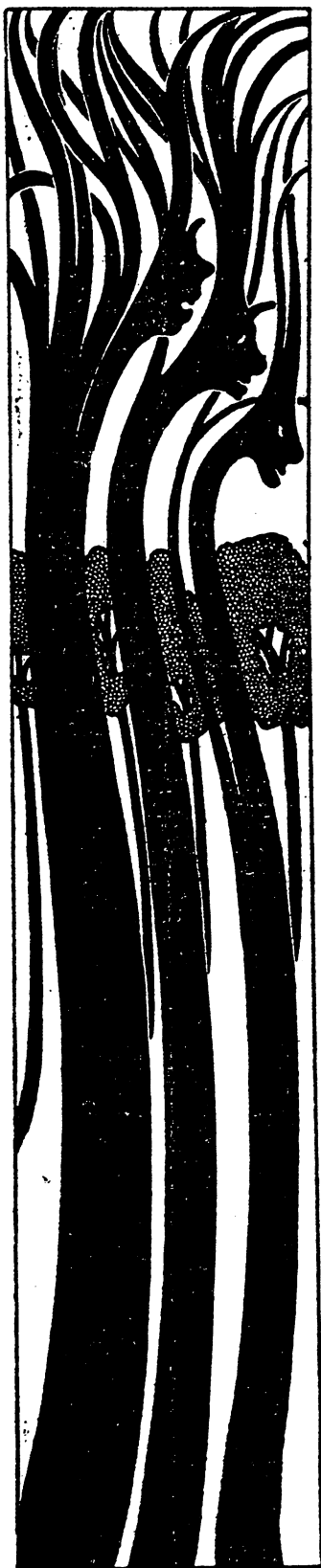
But I did get a fright the other night. I'd been sleepin' good that night till about five o'clock when I heard someone holler "Fire, Fire!" Sometimes I can't sleep anyway—I'm as wideawake as an owl. I don't know what ails me—I s'pose I don't work very hard and I don't need very much sleep.

Well, that night I snoozed right along till I heard that holler of "Fire," and there was a child, too, that was squallin' "Mamma, mamma, get up!" Then three or four would holler all in a heap. It was in this house snug up to mine next door where the Frenchmen live. Next thing I knew the young man there woke up and began to swear. He was putting in the biggest swear I ever see. He quieted down pretty soon, but from those first tunes you'd say he'd make a good captain of a pirate ship. With all this rumpus goin' on I thought I'd better roll out. So I crept to the window and had a look and everything was dark, and I thought, "Well, it aint burst out yet."

Still the racket went on and I went into the parlor and peeked out the window there and then I saw the fire in the cellar of that next house right tight under my

**Enter numerous little Darkies.—
"Melon Song."—Darkies try to
steal melons—melons open and
swallow Darkies.**





nose. The glass of the cellar window was all lighted up and you could hear the flames cracklin'.

I thought to myself, "Well, it'll go, and this too ;" but I was so struck with the performance that I sat there barefoot watching it.

Then it ocured to me that I'd better get my clothes and be ready to get out. So I trotted into the bedroom and when I come back into the parlor again I couldn't see no blaze, bus just white smoke pourin' out the cellar window ; and the people next door was sittin' there lookin' and talkin'. They're little critters, anyway, and they looked like a mess of young hop-pertoads. You'd thought so too, if you seen 'em. They had just got the fire out and there they stood with their pails in their hands and their bare feet and just their shirts and their pants on.

So I didn't get my things into the pillow-case and leave that time, but I couldn't sleep any more that night. The Frenchies' house was full of smoke and the floor over the cellar was so hot it scorched their feet to walk on it. Yes, we had a good scare but it did no harm to speak of.

Next day, of course, the fire inspector come round and he smoked a cigar and put his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and talked with some of the men. Finally he got down on his knees and stuck his nose in through the cellar window and took a look. Then he got up and said the fire was a mystery and that was what the newspaper said. After the inspector said that he seemed to think he'd done his duty and he poked the ashes off the end of his cigar with his little finger and walked away up street, to draw his salary I s'pose.

The fire wasn't no mystery to me. Those Frenchies had a lot of kindling wood in the cellar and some straw that they were goin' to put under carpets. The boy there used to go in the cellar early in the morning after kindlings and he must have lit a match and dropped it in the straw—no mystery about that. Well the straw burnt and the wood burnt and

SCENE IV. The Road beside the Farm. Enter Three Lovers, Three Sisters and Maid. Song, "The Masher is a Very Funny Thing." Enter Townspeople,—announce return of Ship. First Merchant prepares to go to city. Beauty asks for a present of one red rose.—Song, "Bring me a Rose." Merchant departs.—Ensemble.—Curtain.

some jars of pickles got too hot and busted, but it's noways likely the damage amounted to more'n three dollars.

That don't matter—what I think about is that inspector. He didn't use his brains—only just his mouth. What's the matter with a woman having such an office is what I want to know? and what's all this fuss about women's not being allowed to vote? Now I say there's lots of things a woman knows more about'n men, and there's lots of things where they've got more gumption. Put a man in office and he's like a rooster—always thinking about himself and strutting around and getting up on the fence and crowing. A woman's more likely to tend to business, I think. Anyway, in the why and wherefore of things going on around a house she'll find out more in five minutes than a man with a cigar can in a week.

I never thought much of women's voting before, but after I see the carryings on of that inspector I went up and paid my taxes and got my name put on the register to vote for school committee. We've got to have a little progress in this world—that's the way I think about it.

DUSK & FREDERIC F. SHERMAN.

The evening hour of love's brief happy day,
And where is She now while the last
sands run?

Her smile I welcomed with the rising sun,
Nor dreamed the dusk would find her far
away.

I, on the threshold in the last warm ray,
Remember how when morn had but begun
We stood together there. The dream
is done,

And in the shadow here alone I stay.

The world is quiet, and its quietness
Is in my mind where all thoughts come
and go

Unnoticed as the birds that fail to bless
This sad hour with a single song I know;
And hope within my heart grows less and
less

And dies out with the day's last golden
glow.

ACT 2. SCENE I. *The Enchanted Forest.* Enter First Merchant on Horseback; tells of the failure of his trip.—Becomes lost in Forest. Every tree is of an ugly shape which laughs and grins at him. He travels on,—the scene changes and gradually becomes more pleasing, until he enters a beautiful Rose Garden,

